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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by Hadassah-Women's Zionist Organization of America, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Since 2002 the Hadassah Foundation has focused on economic empowerment. Our grantees seek to promote fundamental change by addressing the underlying obstacles that impede the social development of women and girls. The majority of people living in poverty are women and children. Access to financing at affordable rates and appropriate training are the major obstacles that prevent women from becoming entrepreneurs. Thus the Foundation supports programs that provide low-income women with resources and training to enable them to become financially sufficient. For example the Al Zahraa Organization for Women offered empowerment courses for Arab and Israeli women in the Galilee. A Step Forward is a program of Economic Empowerment for Bedouin Women teaching women living in Rahat how to start small businesses in their homes and how to use modern techniques for their traditional sewing and embroidery. The Foundation offers services and training not offered by mainstream institutions. It provides loans at reasonable rates to women who do not have the necessary credit history or collateral.

The Foundation clearly fosters social change for women and girls. It understands that helping women means helping families. The Hadassah Foundation provides the tools for economic self-sufficiency. In one of the programs, co-directed by two women, a *Mizahi* (a Jew from an Arab land) and a Palestinian Israeli, a multicultural "school without walls" was established in which the women learned computer literacy and English. In many of the programs the women receive free legal assistance and information concerning women's rights and privileges under the law. A program aimed at reducing violence against women is located in Haifa. There are other centers which advocate on behalf of sexual abuse. Through innovative and creative funding for women the Hadassah Foundation engages in cutting edge initiative making a difference in the lives of women and girls, empowering them to affect change in their lives and the lives of their families.